

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

One challenging aspect of learning Spanish is the comprehension, acquisition, and subsequent production of the subjunctive “mood”. This verb form is not used much in English; one example is “I wish that he were here.” This sentence, while grammatically correct, seems almost archaic nowadays.

In Spanish, however, the subjunctive is an integral part of the language. Some look at it as a literary mood, but it is also used extensively as part of everyday speech. It is vital, therefore, that second language learners become comfortable with the subjunctive, and this can be very challenging for English speakers since they are not accustomed to it. Most textbooks give an explanation of how the mood is used and follow up with exercises. However, usually the textbooks stop at this point.

Since the form describes possibilities, fears, and desires – things that may or may not occur – it is inherently poetic. I wanted to show my students the poetry of this beautiful verb form, but I could not find a resource that allowed me to accomplish that objective. Therefore, I created a lesson based on a song by a Peruvian singer that uses the subjunctive.

After the class studied and became comfortable with the verb forms of the subjunctive mood, I told my Spanish IV students that we would look at the concept in a new way. I handed out the lyrics to the song:

*Quisiera encontrar
*Alguién que bese como tú
*Alguién que me ame igual que tú
*Y que me abrace
*Ya acabe con mi soledad
*Alguién que sienta de verdad
Pues por las noches
Cuando pretendo de amar
Me hace llorar la realidad
Es que yo temo
Yo no me quiero acostumbrar
A lo de hoy, a lo real
REFRÁN:
En el silencio, sale cosas de verdad
Me atrape el tormento
Si tan solo, mirar y más allá

Pero sé que no puedo, no puedo más

*Quisiera encontrar
Alguién tan bella como tú
Alguién tan suave como tú
*Y que destroce
Toda esta horrible sensación
Que me reseca corazón
REFRÁN
*Quisiera volver
A ser momento del final
Y no vivir, ya nada más
*Quisiera encontrar
*Algo que sea siempre tú
Algún lugar, alguna luz
Quisiera encontrar

Alguién tan bella como tú
Alguién tan suave como tú
Quisiera encontrar
*Alguién que bese como tú
*Alguién que me ame igual que tú

Tan buena madre como tú
Alguién con quien pueda respirar
Es imposible volver a amar
*Es imposible que vuelva a amar

We read the lyrics and made sure that everyone understood all the words. Then I divided the class into groups of three or four and they listened to the song. While they were listening, I handed out a guidesheet to help them understand the singer's themes and how they related to the subjunctive. Working cooperatively, they completed the task, and we discussed their responses. They saw that the present tense described the singer's real suffering and longing, while the lines in the subjunctive described the desperate and impossible hope of finding someone just like the person whom the writer has lost.

As a follow-up, I had the students read some poetry by Pablo Neruda to see how the famous poet also used the subjunctive mood. I also assigned a creative project – the students could choose to write their own poems or design a cover for the Suárez-Vertiz CD that portrayed the concepts we discussed in class.

Surprisingly, all students chose to write lyrics. While some were humorous, all included uses of the subjunctive. Many wanted to share their songs, and others preferred that I read their lyrics anonymously. Some songs were beautifully done and displayed rare lyricism and insight.

2. List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.

7.1. 23. - Identify common and distinct features, such as grammatical structures, among languages.

Literary works, while inherently important, also include numerous examples of acquired forms and vocabulary. By reading the lyrics and finding the use of the subjunctive mood versus the present tense, the students practiced the forms in an enjoyable way.

Creative writing is a great tool for helping students gain confidence in using a new grammatical concept. Too often they are asked to write sentences that have no contextual base – e.g., “I forgot to bring the hairdresser’s nail file.” In creating their own works in the second language, students must remember new concepts and produce them. This means that they will have greater comfort with the verb form and will be able to recognize and use it with more accuracy.

For example, one student wrote,

“Yo duermo cada noche.
Duermo en mi cama.
Yo sueño cada noche.
Sueño con la vida.

Sueño que tú me ames
Sueño que tú me quieras
Sueño que tú estés conmigo.
Pero, yo me despierto.
Y tú no me amas.
Y tú no me quieres.
Y tú no estás conmigo.”

This displays perfect understanding of how the mood is used.

7.2. 12. - Analyze interrelationships between the language and the culture of a given group of people, as evidenced in their literary works and communications, as well as in their political, economic, and religious structures.

The lyrics by Suárez-Vértiz were perfect for the lesson because the writer contrasted the present tense and the subjunctive so strikingly. We discussed open-ended questions such as: Who is the song about? and What happened to the woman? The class came up with answers such as : his wife, his lover; and she died, or she left him because he was unfaithful. They had to support their theories with evidence from the lyrics themselves.

3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the

practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.

The students are in a Spanish IV class. A large majority will be taking language in college and will need, if they pursue Spanish, to read literary works and discuss them in upper-level classes. If they do not continue in Spanish, this will be an invaluable skill in their English Literature classes.

They also had to learn the subjunctive as part of the Spanish IV curriculum. A subsequent test was given on the forms of the subjunctive (appendix F). The highest grade was 100%, and the lowest was a 65%. More importantly, the students had to write an essay on the lyrics and how the use of tense framed and amplified the theme of the song (appendix G.) 98% of the students fulfilled this task.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

If I were teaching this lesson in inner-city Philadelphia, for example, I might choose another song to go with the one by Suárez-Vertiz. Many songs use the subjunctive, such as “¿Dónde estás, corazón?” by Shakira. I would like to show the students that there are many kinds of music in the Spanish-speaking world, and that the recording artists use the concepts we learn in class.

I could also vary the choices of the creative projects, adding other possibilities such as drama or collage to include other intelligences. This would depend on the students themselves, of course.

Assessment might differ as well. Some students do not do well with written tests, so I might examine them orally or give them paired-response tasks to complete. Production can be very challenging to an inner-city student, so I might rely on comprehension tasks instead.